

Sasha Valdes 8th Grade Speech

First off, I would like to thank all of our amazing teachers and staff here at country school who make this place so special. Throughout the years, they have helped us learn and grow both as students and individuals. They have encouraged us to take risks, seize opportunities and have fun along the way. So let's give them all a big round of applause. They deserve it.

I have been at NCCS for 9 amazing years. In that time, I have met some of the kindest and most wonderful people. They have touched my life and the lives of others. They have encouraged others to step out of their comfort zones, explore the endless possibilities, and find themselves along the way.

This is a journey that we will all have to take throughout our lives, no matter where our opportunities take us. Whether we are staying at NCCS or heading off to a new school, we must always try to push ourselves and face our fears because if we don't, we will never know who we could become. As Nelson Mandella once said, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

Some studies say that 77% of Americans are afraid of public speaking. Look around you, every 3 out of 4 people encounter this fear. Yet, just a few weeks ago, we all gave our World Congress speeches in front of our classmates and our families. A lot of people were nervous, I sure know I was. But we pulled together as a grade and encouraged

each other to face the challenge head on. It was hard, but by all accounts, some amazing speeches were delivered that day.

Raise your hand if you remember the swing that we did at Camp Dudley. For those who don't know, it was a set of ropes, about 40 feet in the air, that allowed the swinger to pull a release latch and fall. Don't worry, it was safe; I think. Anyways, the swinger would be hoisted into the air by their peers until they told their friends to stop. Many times, I saw people think they had reached their limit, but then push themselves to go just a bit higher. Once they had stopped, they had to pull a rope which would cause them to fall. Some people took longer than others, but in the end, everyone pulled their release latch and flew. People yelled and whooped as they realized how fun it was, and their fears melted away. If people hadn't pushed themselves to overcome their fears, they would never have known the joy of flying through the air.

If we hadn't pushed ourselves beyond our perceived limits and faced our fears, we would never have known whether we liked a sport, or whether we could run a trial, like we all did in English class. We have been trying new things in spite of our fears since before we could walk, so why should we stop now? It may be hard, but we have done it before, and we must continue. If we do not try, we will never know how much we could have achieved. As long as we are not afraid to try new things and be greater than our fears, we can accomplish anything. No dream is too big, or too crazy, or too impossible. Once, people thought that we could never reach the moon, but like Buzz Aldrin said: "The sky is not the limit, because there are footprints on the moon."